

DENE MAGNA

Leading : Learning : Training : Technology

Headteacher: Stephen Brady BSc(Hons)



Proposal to increase the age range of students taught at Dene Magna School by adding a Sixth Form and teaching A-Level students in the new campus building in the Northern Quarter.

Consultation

Date: 15th June – 13th July 2018

Headteacher: Mr Stephen Brady

Chair of Governors: Dr Paul Weiss

Leading aim: 'Every learner shall achieve their maximum potential, and enjoy the process'

National Teaching School
designated by



National College for
Teaching & Leadership



The proposal to open a Sixth Form at Dene Magna School

The Northern Quarter of Cinderford is undergoing a £100 million regeneration scheme. Central to this scheme is the opening of the new Gloucestershire College Campus. Funding has been secured and the college will open in September 2018. This has been possible due to GFirst LEP funding and Government approval (<http://www.gloscol.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/2017/05/northern-quarter-building-to-start-this-month/>). This process involved detailed consultation by Gloucestershire College regarding the location of A-Level and Vocational provision in the new campus. This consultation was not challenged by any educational establishments.

Dene Magna School has been involved in this project since its inception and has always sought to support the development of Post 16 provision in the Forest of Dean. The original aim was to provide support for the A-Level provision from staff across the Central Forest Secondary Schools. This model evolved over time to Dene Magna School being the sole support school in this development, but the hope was always there to involve the other schools in the Forest in time.

Evidence from discussions prior to consultation, and from our findings in our pre-consultation research, show that there is an incredibly strong appetite for high quality provision in the central Forest area and that this could play a major factor in raising aspirations for all groups of students across the area. Currently, many students leave the Forest of Dean for other providers and there is no centralised A-Level provision in the area. It is the belief of the Headteachers, District Council, County Council, Foresters, local businesses and our MP that this development, and in that, the provision of A-Level teaching in the new building is absolutely vital.

In April 2017, Gloucestershire College reviewed its A-Level provision (across three campus sites). It cited competition in Cheltenham and Gloucester in particular, as well as the difficulties in recruiting staff across the campus sites on shorter contracts as a key factor in deciding to end its A-Level provision. As a multi-campus College, this inevitably led to A-Level provision in the Forest of Dean ceasing.

This effectively leaves the central Forest of Dean (an area of approximately 225 square miles) without any A-Level provision. It also leaves learners in more remote areas with public transport journey times of over 2 hours to access provision. The impact this will have on an area of high deprivation, poor transport links, low social mobility and high numbers of Pupil Premium and NEET students will be profound.

It has been no secret that Dene Magna School has always expressed a desire to host A-Level teaching and feedback from students and parents/carers on results day has only served to bolster this desire as we are constantly asked when we are getting a sixth form. As an Outstanding School, we firmly believe that the high quality teaching and learning provided here will transition very well into the next phase of KS5 teaching.

Plans have been drawn up over the past three years, timetables created, staffing models selected and all of this has been done in conjunction with Gloucestershire College. This has by no means been a quick decision.

Following lengthy discussions with Gloucestershire College and an expression of interest to the RSC office (following published DfE guidance), we have started a consultation process with a view to ensuring that the already planned provision in the new college can actually take place. Our involvement has changed in that now the students (250 PAN) would be Dene Magna students and we would be teaching A-Level students in the new campus building.

This is obviously not a straightforward desire to expand the school, nor is it in any way a vanity project. This is based on us fulfilling our part in ensuring the new college building has the very best provision and, working with our Central Forest School partners, playing our part to ensure that this lynchpin development can thrive and play its role in the £100 million regeneration of the Northern Quarter, and by way of a ripple effect, the wider Forest of Dean.

This consultation will inform our decision to apply for a significant change to an Academy so that we can teach A-Level subjects to Dene Magna students in the new college building. The start date for this will hopefully be September 2019.

A pre-consultation ran between 12 March to 9 April 2018 and followed Gloucestershire County Council guidance. Local schools and education providers, shops, local businesses, services as well as the press were all contacted and asked for their comments. Following the end of this consultation an outline of responses was communicated to the public (a copy of the letter can be seen on our website).

Why will opening a Sixth Form benefit our students?

The Governors and Senior Leadership Team of Dene Magna School believe that adding a Sixth Form will:

1. Extend the choice open to current students of the school
2. Provide first class A-Level teaching within a familiar and supportive school environment (a key feature of our proposal is to integrate the 'Dene Magna' culture, ethos, challenge and support into the Sixth Form
3. Enable the school to provide continuity of education during the secondary phase of education
4. Raise the aspirations and improve the experiences of learners in Years 7 to 13
5. Provide excellent opportunities for students to develop leadership skills and make a difference in their local community
6. Provide high quality professional development for teachers
7. Enable the school to recruit and retain additional outstanding teachers
8. Develop greater partnership with other central Forest schools to aid their recruitment, retention and CPD for staff
9. Provide a beacon of aspiration and excellence to allow marginalised students (due to location, disability, disadvantage or low aspiration) to continue their education at the correct level.

Facilities

Teaching will be based in the new campus. As a state of the art building, specialist classrooms will be available for A-Level teaching. These include spacious, modern Science laboratories and excellent classrooms. Other features include pastoral support offices, independent study spaces and a meeting area for students. The A-Level provision will only be accessed by the A-Levels staff and students and will have that 'Dene Magna' feel.

The new campus will be accessible by car and public transport. There is a dedicated bus terminal for the campus and parking for over 200 cars. This makes the campus accessible for public transport and will allow us to support any students for whom transport or a fear of change with the transition to A-

Levels will provide a barrier. The campus will be a beacon of aspiration and excellence for the Forest of Dean.

The Dene Magna School Journey

Dene Magna School has a proud tradition of excellence. As a school that has consistently been rated Outstanding School in all areas, we are confident that our unique mixture of challenge and support ensure that we all form a strong community and aim to get the best out of each other.

The current Headteacher joined the school in January 2010 and has led an evolution of the very best CPD for staff and Pastoral care for students/parents/carers. Under his leadership, the school has grown and in September 2018 there will be 863 students. Buildings have been updated and curriculums developed to prepare learners for making their mark on the wider world.

The school challenges students to get the very best grades, value the wider curriculum of a school and when leaving, go and see the world to learn new things. This challenge then involves returning to the Forest of Dean to invest, inspire and develop this area so that we all play our part in the wider regeneration of the Forest of Dean.

As the lead school in the Forest Teaching School Alliance, Dene Magna works closely with partner primary schools as well as successfully supporting neighbouring secondary schools. All the schools in the Alliance work together for the good of the young people in the area.

As said, the school has worked alongside Gloucestershire College since 2013.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-gloucestershire-24122816>

During this time, the school has invested in staff who can teach A-Levels in anticipation of approval and readiness for the opening of the new College.

Pre Consultation

Having conducted extensive research and undergone a pre-consultation process, the Governors and staff at Dene Magna School are clear on their final consultation request. All of the information we have gathered has given us the confidence in what we want to achieve. It has also led us to the point of this final, specific consultation.

Who is involved in the consultation?

This consultation will last for four weeks and will run from Friday 15th June to Friday 13th July.

Copies of this document (as well as a covering letter) will be distributed to all stakeholders affected by the proposed change. Comments or objections can be made on any grounds and feedback will be given, where requested, on any issue.

Gloucestershire County Council have been contacted regarding the proposal, as have the Forest of Dean District Council and the office of the Regional Schools Commissioner. We have also contacted all neighbouring Local Authorities.

As well as distributing the consultation proposal to all schools and colleges in Gloucestershire and the surrounding areas, we have also contacted any Local Authority that maintains a Statement/EHCP for a student at Dene Magna School.

All parents/carers/stakeholders at Dene Magna and in the area have been contacted. We have also published the consultation in public buildings and places of work across the area.

The consultation information has also been published on our school website and shared via Dene Magna social media platforms. Users have been encouraged to 'share' the consultation to ensure it reaches the widest audience.

What happens at the end of the consultation period?

All of the responses will be collated and a statement will be published to indicate the outcome of the consultation. The responses will be communicated to the Governing Body via a formal proposal and once considered, if agreed, a decision to proceed with the full business case will be put to the Regional Schools Commissioner. If not agreed, this decision will be communicated to all stakeholders listed in the consultation.

Requests for information and Frequently Asked Questions

The Governing Body is keen to enable all stakeholders to make a well informed contribution to the consultation. In such a remote area, we value any communication and will respond to questions asked. This will be done via letter/email and all responses will be published on the school website (About Us/Sixth Form)

Any request for additional information can be made in writing to:

Julie Russell
Clerk to Governors
Dene Magna School
Abenhall Road
Mitcheldean
GL17 0DU

Or via email to:
consultation@denemagna.gloucs.sch.uk

Initial Frequently Asked Questions that came up during our research and pre-consultation

Q1. Is there a demand for a Sixth Form in the Forest of Dean?

Our own surveys have shown an overwhelming desire for A-Levels to be taught through Dene Magna. An open response online survey with 340 responses showed that 95.9% of respondents wanted A-Level provision in the Central Forest and 95% supported the idea of Dene Magna leading this.

We believe that an area the size of the Central Forest of Dean, which is approximately 220 square miles, should have A-Level provision within easy reach.

Anecdotally, parents of students at Dene Magna continue to press the school to run A-Levels and Central Forest schools are all aware that not teaching A-Levels has impacted on school choices and has been a factor in students leaving the Forest of Dean for their secondary education.

Q2. The Forest of Dean and surrounding areas already has post-16 provision. Why are you planning to provide more places?

Local Authority forecasts of pupil numbers across the Central Forest Secondary Schools (not including Wydean and Newent) and analyses of projected numbers of students who may achieve grades that enable them to study A-Levels show a healthy cohort who, we know are not all accessing the wider provision.

19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
261	256	242	252	251	246

Note: These projections are based upon 2017 GCSE outcomes across the four Central Forest Schools. These numbers will rise in line with continued improvements across the schools.

Our research also showed us that transport was a major issue on students in the Forest of Dean not continuing to A-Level. Headteachers in the Central Forest Schools claim that poor transport and long distances are a factor in choice (and this is exacerbated for disadvantaged students – leading to higher numbers of NEET students – **Not In Education Employment and Training**).

Some students face journey times of over two hours to access current A-Level provision on public transport. This is unacceptable and is a factor in the poor social mobility data for the Forest of Dean.

Parents/carers and local businesses have told us that they want more choice. They believe that this will challenge all providers to keep improving, which will ultimately benefit the wider Forest of Dean.

Q3. What would the entrance criteria be for A Level courses at Dene Magna School?

Aspirations will be high and we will be working hard to further our links with industry and Universities to ensure that our students go on to make their mark on society. We have worked with Gloucestershire College to access their own research on student success rates linked to GCSE outcomes. We would mirror similar entrance criteria currently in operation at local A Level providers. Entry requirements will be suitable for the courses offered and exact details will be published as part of our admissions/entry policy.

Q4. How many subjects could the Sixth Form offer?

The initial plan for subject offer is for A-Levels to be offered in English, Maths (including Further and Core), Chemistry, Physics, Biology, History, Geography, Spanish, French, PE, Business, Politics, Sociology, Psychology, Technology, Drama and EPQ. We will also explore other subjects.

We feel this gives us a balance and also the type of offer that enables students from the Forest of Dean to access higher level employment.

Q5. Would you plan to build a special building to house the Sixth Form at Dene Magna?

There is a new college in Cinderford which is a 10 minute drive from Dene Magna. We will be teaching A-Levels out of this already built, brand new facility, with purpose built labs and classrooms. It will have parking for 200 cars and a dedicated bus terminal.

Q6. Can the school afford to open a Sixth Form?

As Dene Magna has been working closely with Gloucestershire College, we have built our staffing model with A-Level teaching in mind. The school operates a healthy budget and is very well run.

Q7. Do you claim that opening a Sixth Form will improve the quality of teaching for younger years?

Dene Magna already has an enviable CPD system for staff. Students are at the centre of this and we work with them to ensure our teaching is the best it can be. Students are used to mentor and support younger children, as well as coaching teachers on their own lessons. The addition of a Sixth Form will add even more quality to this process.

Q8. If the school is given permission to open a Sixth Form, will it definitely open in 2019?

Our planning and preparation means that our aim is for the Sixth Form A-Level facility to be ready to be delivered on new campus in September 2019.

Q9. Are your teachers suitably skilled to offer high quality A Level teaching?

All of the staff at Dene Magna have been preparing for A-Level teaching. Appropriate training has been given and staff have been visiting other providers to ensure they provide A-Level teaching to the same level and quality as KS3 and 4 teaching.

The Headteacher has worked with Christopher Healy (recently retired Headteacher of Balcarras School) on the wider planning for the Sixth Form. Chris established one of the most successful Sixth Forms and he will also act as the quality assurance partner for the Sixth Form.

Consultation Response Form (please feel free to respond in writing via letter or email)

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Please return to the following address by **5 pm on 13th July 2018**.

Mrs J Russell
Clerk to Governors
Dene Magna School
Abenhall Road
Mitcheldean
Gloucestershire GL17 0DU

Name of person responding: _____

Interest (please tick all that apply)

Current Dene Magna Student
Ex Dene Magna Student
Parent of a student
Parent of a future student
Community responder
Staff Member

Other (please specify): _____

Please comment on the proposal to add a Sixth Form at Dene Magna in the space below. Please continue on another page if required.

Thank you for your response.